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ABSTRACT

A strategy was developed at Montana State University to ensure future employment for their preservice teacher education students. The emphasis is upon a full utilization of networking and mentoring for the students beginning as freshmen in college. The college suggests a seven-step approach to finding future employment which involves both mentoring and networking at the local and regional levels. Outlines are presented of the vital components of networking (connecting those who have need for information and services with those who have the resources) and mentoring (individual who may be called upon for help or advice in either personal or professional life). (JD)

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A FLAWLESS METHOD FOR FIRST YEAR TEACHER EMPLOYMENT

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INTRODUCTION

In September, 1989 and 1990, a questionnaire was given to the educational psychology students at Montana State University. The question that was asked was "What is your greatest concern about becoming a teacher?" The number one response was "getting a job after graduation." We will address this issue and assume the survey is true nationwide.

If this survey is true and valid, it would indicate we should be spending some time preparing our students for techniques and strategies for "getting a job." Many authorities have stated that soon there will be a shortage of teachers in the United States. Alí of us in the field of education know there are "pockets" where this is not true. In Montana, all of the college/university towns have surpluses of teachers in all areas. Universally, as a nation, federal funding is decreasing which also creates a problem with cutbacks. Because of this concern, we have developed a strategy for future employment of our students. We believe one of the best methods of gaining employment is full utilization of networking and mentoring for our students, not beginning as a senior, but beginning as a freshman in college. We ask each freshman and sophomore in our classes very important questions about networking and mentoring.

In order to motivate our students, we ask a very general question. "If you were forced to find a job in teaching tomorrow, what would be your strategy?" Less than 10 percent had any idea of how to go about finding a job in education. This should come as no surprise because many have never been employed other than in part-time jobs in their home towns. We suggest a seven-step approach to help our students find future employment.

1. Write down all the names of teachers and administrators you now know in the field of education.

2. Within the next two weeks, call each of these people on your list and inform them you are going to become a teacher.

3. Visit with each of these people and ask for their advice and help to further your chances for employment in the near future.

4. Send a handwritten "thank-you" note to each of these people and promise to keep in contact with them.

5. Join as many associations as you can afford, either locally or nationally that will help you broaden your networking and mentoring for future employment. This can be done generally or specifically.

6. Attend as many local education meetings either generally or in your specific area as possible.

7. Visit as many local school teachers in your immediate area as you can possibly find time for during your college career.

This is a very specific process that involves both mentoring and networking at both the local and regional level. Many students have commented that this is very valuable in helping with their future employment.

NETWORKING

Definition: To connect those who have need for information and services with those who have the required resources.

Who needs networking?

1. Anyone who wants to find a job
2. Anyone who wants to advanced in a career
3. Anyone who plans to change careers
4. Anyone who wants to do a better job in his/her present position

Three vital parts of networking

1. Visibility -- you must see and be seen. Visit with everyone at the organizational meetings.
   a. exchange business cards
   b. circulate within parties
   c. introduce yourself to all members
2. Familiarity
   a. show an interest in all people in your organization
   b. do favors for your co-workers
   c. master small-talk, talk about anything that interests the other party
   d. understand that every person in the organization needs to be wanted; sincerely listen and talk to all members of the organization

3. Image
   a. decide who you are at work
   b. speak to everyone
   c. participate in what is happening around you
   d. be interested in people and they will be interested in you
   e. do favors whenever necessary
   f. extend yourself
   g. never underestimate the power of simple courtesy
   h. make yourself approachable
   i. give strokes when strokes are due
   j. maintain a positive outlook

RULES OF NETWORKING

1. Be openminded - The cardinal rule

2. Be prepared - Success is when preparedness meets opportunity

3. Treat those in your network as equals - Networks are not bureaucracies

4. Choose members based on information, not position - The goal of networking is to share and acquire information

5. Don't be afraid to ask - Don't be shy or embarrassed

6. Don't waste your resources - Don't abuse members of your network

7. Give without expectation - Share information gladly

8. Say Thank You - Express appreciation, tell the helper the outcome of the help

9. Set realistic and achievable goals - You are in control of your own life

10. Be committed and determined to do whatever it takes - Networking takes time; be patient

MENTORING

Definition: Anyone whom you may call upon for help or advice in either your personal or professional life.

A good mentor should have one or more of these qualities:

1. Authority in their field
2. Influence
3. Interest in your growth and development
4. Willingness to commit time and emotional support

ROLE OF A MENTOR

1. One who mutually consents to take an active interest in the personal career development of another person.
2. One who supports the person's dreams and helps put them into effect.
3. One who is a mixture of a parent and a peer.
4. One who actively guides and is a consultant and advisor.
5. One who becomes actively involved and may be used as a role model.
6. One who possesses sincerity, generosity, compassion, and concern.
7. One who looks objectively at accomplishments and gives encouragement.
8. One who cuts red tape when politics is involved.
9. One who acts as a host and guide.
10. One who shares the dream of a goal.
11. One who has influence and will use it to help.
12. One who knows the politics and will help politically.
13. One who opens career doors.
14. One who teaches.
15. One who is a true and loyal friend.

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